



# City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

## Seattle Transportation

Grace Crunican, Director

April 4, 2005

### *Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board*

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The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the City on matters related to pedestrians and the impacts which actions by the City may have upon the pedestrian environment; and shall have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the City's planning processes insofar as they may relate to pedestrian safety and access.

City Council Resolution 28791

Matthew Amster-Burton, Chair  
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Seattle WA 98102-4661  
mamster@gmail.com

Grace Crunican, Director  
Seattle Department of Transportation  
700 5th Avenue, Suite 3900  
PO Box 34996  
Seattle WA 98104-4996

Dear Grace Crunican:

On February 17, 2005, a 12-year-old boy named Nick Messenger was critically injured by a car while crossing at the intersection of NW 87th St. and 15th Ave NW. The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board believes that aspects of the urban design of this section of 15th contributed to the collision, and in this letter we propose modifications to the streetscape and other measures that we hope will help to prevent future tragedies and serve as a model for how to handle the conflict between arterials and urban villages in other parts of Seattle.

The intersection of 87th and 15th is in the heart of the Crown Hill Residential Urban Village. There are businesses on both sides of the street and pedestrian volumes are relatively heavy. A pedestrian dashing across the street and weaving among oncoming traffic is a common sight.

There is a signalized crossing at 85th (two blocks south) and another at Mary Avenue and Holman Road (four blocks north). The next signalized crossing north of Mary on Holman is a mile away. While researching this advisory I drove this stretch of 15th/Holman numerous times, and the prevailing speed is 45mph, with many cars driving at 50mph or more.

The greatest pedestrian danger in this area is excessive vehicle speed. The speed limit should be no higher than 30mph throughout the urban village, and speed trapping by SPD should be routine. Banners should be posted on Holman to the north and 15th to the south announcing to drivers that they are entering the Crown Hill Urban Village, a pedestrian zone.

Two lane use changes should be made immediately. As cars driving north on 15th approach 85th, the curb lane should be made right-turn only. As it stands, cars in the curb lane proceed through the intersection at high speed and attempt to merge into the next lane around 87th without checking for pedestrian traffic. Proceeding south on 15th, morning parking restrictions in the curb lane begin just south of 87th; again, cars accelerate into the curb lane and ignore pedestrians. This parking restriction should be removed.

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SPAB would like to remain agnostic about where to place new signalized crossings. However, unless the roadway is reduced from its current five lanes (unlikely, to say the least), it will probably never be safe to cross except at a signalized crossing. Adding only one signal between 85th and Mary (for an average of one signal every three blocks) will do little to increase pedestrian safety.

Furthermore, traffic signals are among the most effective calming devices. Drivers who would never consider stopping for a pedestrian at an unsignalized crossing will routinely stop at red lights.

It will be challenging to provide for smooth traffic flow and a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment in Crown Hill, but we believe it can be done and will serve as a model for how to treat pedestrian-vehicle conflicts in urban villages.

Sincerely,

Matthew Amster-Burton  
Chair, Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board

cc: Mayor Greg Nickels  
Councilmembers Richard Conlin, Tom Rasmussen, Jean Godden  
Chief Gil Kerlikowske